

A

SERMON, 10.

PREACHED IN

TUNBRIDGE-WELLS CHAPEL,

ON OCCASION OF READING THE PRAYER
OF THANKSGIVING, FOR THE LATE
VICTORY.

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LONDON:

PRINTED FOR F. AND C. RIVINGTON, NO. 62, ST. PAUL'S
CHURCH-YARD; AND SOLD BY MR. SPRANGE
AND MR. KNIGHT, TUNBRIDGE-WELLS.



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IT can scarcely be necessary for the Author of the following discourse to observe, that it was not written with any view to publication. Unaware till within three days, that he should be called to the discharge of the sunday duty, it was literally written on the spur of the occasion. A most respectable congregation approved: and in a manner so flattering and urgent, as to preclude a denial, requested its publication. This statement the Author presumes to offer in excuse for a plan less digested than the occasion would have otherwise exacted. For the sentiments he deems no apology needful.

Lately published by the same Author,

S E R M O N

ON

V A R I O U S S U B J E C T S,

M O R A L A N D T H E O L O G I C A L.

Preached in Tunbridge-Wells Chapel.

In One Volume 8vo. Price, in Boards, Six Shillings.

S E R M O N.

PSALM XXVII. 16.

*O tarry thou the Lord's leisure: be strong, and
he shall comfort thine heart; and put thou
thy trust in the Lord.*

HOWEVER incomprehensible to the human understanding may be the ways and dealings of the Almighty, the enquiring and contemplative mind safely rests on this conclusion, that he is observant of the ways of men, and eventually righteous in his decisions on our conduct. Our difficulties originate in the magnitude of the object, which is held up to our contemplation, and in the minuteness of our capacities for investigation. If we tried our powers under impressions more familiar to us, we should be constrained to allow that our inability to determine with

accuracy was no proof of non-existence in the mystery we are unable to fathom.

Let the human eye gaze on the sun to ascertain its nature. It's powers of vision will soon be overcome; its scrutiny must speedily terminate: but doth it follow that this glorious luminary is the opaque object, which, to an abused and vanquished faculty, it would appear?—Approach a mountain of Alpine magnitude: now you view the cavern in its side; you admire the neat abode of industry, the glowing verdure at its base, and the numerous herds, which fatten on its luxuriant soil:—but its height, the extent of its circumference, its relative aspect or its positive magnitude, you are here unable to calculate. Retreat to a distance; and you may estimate these particulars: you see in all its glory, the proud sovereign of an extensive champaign:—but now its cavern becomes a speck; its verdure and its various other objects blend into mellow tints, and contribute only to harmonize a general scene.

So is it, when the human eye presumes to measure the works of Omnipotence. Vast
operations,

operations, as they appear to the human understanding, are frequently but parts of an immense scale of contingencies. We see them, and argue on their effect. The event proves our sight partial; and our arguments inconclusive. We observe the wicked triumph; and the righteous in depression: the well concerted measure fails; the plan ill arranged is crowned with success. Years elapse; seasons change; the face of nature alters: the event wears a different aspect. Then retreating to the distance, whence the eye can, in one view, embrace the general coincidence, the minute perplexing circumstances blend into a consistent mass, and represent the ways of God conformable to mercy, wisdom and justice.

Thus we observe and determine in private life; each on his own, and on his neighbour's case. When moreover in our own we experience delight or calamity, we presume that we can trace the one to our deserts, and not unfrequently the other to a fate unmerited. The decision may in one case be accurate; in the other it certainly is not:

for God is the dispenser of strict justice. Far wiser were it however to doubt our own decisions: to accept the good as an undeserved blessing, a spur to the discharge of duty:—the evil, as a proof that we have swerved; and as a call to amendment. Revelation thus interprets the prominent events of human life. Can we possess a safer guide? When chastized, we may accept it as a token of mercy; submit to the correction, and amend.

But an intercourse with the world opens wider scenes upon us; scenes, whose contingencies are less obvious to decision; as they are more fruitful of consequences, and more intricate in their connexions. But it should constantly be remembered, that society, however magnified and involved, is but an aggregate of individuals. Under impressions merely temporal it may be observed, that a community will partake of prosperity in proportion to the industry, activity and honesty of its members. Under higher impressions it may be concluded that it will share the divine protection in exact proportion

tion to its allegiance. These points will be admitted. General experience supports them. But it is far from being equally safe to infer the converse, divine favour from visible success, or wrath from apparent adversity. The events are too near to the age which views them, to justify a decided opinion on their issue. Besides that one community (even as it is the case with individuals) may be constituted a scourge over another, yet more wicked; itself expiating its own offences, by a participation of the calamity.

I venture on these observations in reference to the leading circumstances of the times. Sad times indeed! though our portion of suffering is comparatively light. Times however which should lead us to consider. Consider we do. But too commonly our consideration tends to self-justification; to degrade our enemy, and to exalt ourselves. The conclusion may be just; but it is for the God of the whole earth alone to pronounce on that question. We have one safe course to take: not to assert a claim to the mercies of God, but to labour to deserve them; to
accept

accept the calamities imposed upon us as a scourge, justly merited by our offences; —to judge, that however inscrutable the progression, the issue may eventually be productive of blessing: and by improving our hearts and minds, by the revealed word of God, endeavour so to perform our parts as to forward this general issue: to live as Christians, that we may be entitled to the consolation and to the reward of Christianity.

To effect this, the words of the text recommend a system of conduct peculiarly appropriate. *O tarry thou the Lord's leisure; be strong, and he shall comfort thine heart; and put thou thy trust in the Lord.*

O tarry thou the Lord's leisure!—The question of war is that of all others most difficult for the Christian to discuss. It's legality has been doubted. The question here is short. If all the world were truly Christian, the sword might sleep for ever: for in that case provocation and offence would not exist. But that is not the case. Even those, who chiefly assert the distinction, frequently deserve it the least.

What

What cannot be deemed in itself legal may still be unavoidable. Christianity inculcates peace: but a submission to the tyrannical overwhelming ambition of the wicked, might annihilate every comfort, even to religion itself—but it could not be said to promote peace. Temporary resistance rather would promote it. The principle of necessity legalizes the action.

That the principle may be abused, has been abused, no one, who consults history, can deny. It is one of the subjects on which our Saviour pronounces *Woe unto the world because of offences! It must needs be that offences come: but woe to that man, by whom the offence cometh.* Though crowned by victories, splendid beyond imagination, war must ever be deemed a scourge;—a scourge the bravest will account it; for the brave are generous: and though called to shed blood, greater is their delight to spare it. The scriptures unequivocally pronounce it an avenging power of God. Happy the people, which can trace their warfare to this origin, rather than to ambition, to avarice, to the de-

ceits of politics, or the cunning of wayward hearts. They may expiate their offences, and look forward to the return of favour.

When therefore a nation experiences this calamity, rather than trace it to a political question, better seek its origin in its offences : offences to be expiated only by blood. The offences of our land, (for offences we doubtless have committed) may properly enough be measured, not by comparison with the conduct of our neighbours, but by an estimate of our former blessings, together with our abuse of them. Our blessings have been abundant. Happy in our soil, our climate, our insular situation, whether for defence, or as the means of wealth ; happy in our government, our mild protecting laws, our religion, our commercial prosperity ; happy in the state of society among us, in our domestic intercourse, in every thing, that can be named : happy—so happy ; that could it be imagined the inhabitant of another world, should descend on earth, with ripened faculties of discernment, to fix himself where most enjoyment might become his lot ; here,

doubtless

doubtless in this favoured isle, would he establish his abode. Yet examine but for these few years past, what has been our conduct. How vast the abuse of this happiness! How many, how great the defaulters in gratitude! Listen to the records of our courts of justice: hear the tales of murder, outrage, fraud, seduction, base and aggravated adultery: sad catalogue of crimes! Then attend to our boasts of religion. A pure religion we do profess! but how is it practised? Do the wealthy, the happy of every description, return through its medium their boon of gratitude to the author and giver of all good things? Do the rich, and those elevated by rank, suffer it to curb their licentious indulgences? Do the poor admit its future promises, as an inducement to submit to their present lot; as a motive to restrain them from outrage and violence? Does the enjoyment, which the laws secure to us, of life, property, liberty, actuate to mildness of manners, to submission, to order, to the favouring and fostering of an happy government, friendly to every rank in society? In many instances it doth. But sad

have been, are indeed, the delinquencies in these points: enough certainly to prove, that the vengeance of that Almighty power, who has so signally blessed our land, may be our due. We have reason then to suspect, that having incurred the wrath of God, we may be suffering his vengeance. In the mean time the individual may readily discern his clear line of duty: duty to the avenger, to his God: duty to his fellow sufferers: duty to himself.

His duty to God will consist in submission to his will. The cup of his fury has been poured out: is at this moment flowing upon us: in what portion it is still reserved, he alone can tell: it is our duty to submit. *We are to tarry the Lord's leisure.* As christians and dependent beings, we are thus summoned to act: much more, in the character of persons instructed in the operations of Providence. The events of the present day are of such stupendous magnitude as to baffle calculation. Every feature is new; the impelling powers such as experience never before witnessed. Divided from the mass,
and

and sheltered from the first fury of the storm, it has hitherto been our fate to mark the progress at a distance ; but observation naturally suggests the question “ unto what it tends ? ” Man cannot answer it. Former experience assists him not. It is in the hand of God. Omnipotence is at work : it is for man to account himself his agent ; to the best of his judgment to perform his will ; to *tarry his leisure*, and to rely on his merciful decision.

Thus conducting ourselves, we are next directed to *be strong* ; and we have the promise that God *will comfort our hearts*.

This may primarily be interpreted in a religious sense, that we *be strong in faith : that we take unto us the whole armour of God, that we may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand*. On this point something has already been observed ; and somewhat more will occur in conclusion. I would now rather adopt it as a persuasive to union among ourselves. No truth requires less illustration, than that union is the soul of energy : and energy is a duty, which, as
fellow

fellow citizens and fellow sharers in a fruitful and happy land, we owe to ourselves, our fellow creatures, and our God. We are *to be strong*.

It has been very erroneously stated, that in gospel precept and practice no authority can be traced in support of the virtue, so idolized, although so perverted frequently, in modern times, OF PATRIOTISM. If this virtue is understood to imply an abridgment of wider connections; true. Our Saviour came to declare an universal kindred: his message was *good will to man*; and wherever man inhabits, the glad tidings are addressed. *And, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another*. But, by confining his ministry to the Jews, did he not mark a national attachment? When so tenderly he wept over Jerusalem, the capital of his country, shed he not the tears of patriotic love? * When himself

* “ And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, if thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall

himself * and his apostle † rebuke a magistrate, occupying but abusing the tribunal of justice; did they not assert a civil right? and when his apostle Paul ‡ remonstrated on
the

shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation." Luke xix. 41—44.

* " Jesus answered him, I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing. Why asketh thou me; ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I said.—Jesus answered him, If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me?" John xviii. 20—23.

† " And the high priest Ananias commanded them that stood by him, to smite him on the mouth. Then said Paul unto him, God shall smite thee, thou whited wall: for sittest thou to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law?" Acts xxiii. 2, 3.

‡ " And the keeper of the prison told this saying to Paul, the magistrates have sent to let you go: now therefore depart, and go in peace. But Paul said unto them,

the abuse, in his person, of the privileges of a Roman citizen ; and exacted from unjust magistrates, that they should cover their offence by an act of humiliating condescension ; are not these proofs that a christian may value his temporal blessings, defend his rights, and cherish in his breast the pure fraternal love of patriotism ?

To this end he is admonished to be *strong* : firm in allegiance to the laws, which give him protection ; firm in his exertions to save them from domestic outrage, or from foreign invasion. It is a maxim, verified by long time and experience, that the man, who secludes himself, and sits idle in the hour of danger, is equivalent to an enemy. Weigh the consequences of such conduct, and the

they have beaten us openly uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast us into prison ; and now do they thrust us out privily ? nay verily ; but let them come themselves and fetch us out. And the serjeants told these words unto the magistrates : and they feared when they heard that they were Romans. And they came and besought them, and brought them out, and desired them to depart out of the city." Acts xvi. 36—39.

principle will be found christian. The state, which protects all, has a just claim of support from all. Reciprocity of interest is the soul of the social compact. In this land we possess it. Every individual, whatever his rank, shares it. In the present day the object is peace and security; a continuance of the blessings, which have devolved to us from our ancestors. The object is laudable. It can be attained only by the blessing of God on our pure and united exertions. Let us seek it by lawful means, and *he will comfort our hearts.*

A further step towards insuring success to our hopes, is that we *put our trust in the Lord.* This is a duty we owe to ourselves; our only rational support and effectual consolation. The duty is plain: I enlarge not on it further than to remind you of a reasonable ground for this trust. It is our present happiness that we have recent experience to justify our hope. The prayer of thanksgiving, which the piety of our ecclesiastical rulers has this day dictated, reminds us of such an

instance of divine protection, that the preacher can hazard no charge of presumption, who urges it as a spur to gratitude, as a prompter to confidence, as a lively call to the discharge of duty. The first test of that duty will be thanksgiving. It proclaims, not to ourselves alone—but to the universe; that notwithstanding *our manifold transgressions*, our Saviour and our merciful God *hath not forgotten to be gracious*.

To enter on the minute particulars of the event, which is thus noticed, as an urgent call on our gratitude, and as a warrant to future trust and confidence, were venturing on a topic, which the occasion cannot exact, and for which the information of the preacher cannot be supposed adequate. As a preponderating motive, however, he may remind you that the circumstance mingles with our very political existence. For on the decided superiority of our naval armaments, that, under Providence, must depend. Thence we have derived all, that as a nation is dear and valuable to us; thither we must look for
its

its continuance. It has raised and placed us high in the scale of nations ; it has crowned us with prosperity ; it is the harbinger of hope ; the herald of future safety. But when such interesting particulars are noticed (no disparagement to an honourable profession) our cause must be accounted peculiarly in the hand of God. *They that go down to the sea in ships, and occupy their business in great waters : these men see the works of the Lord ; and his wonders in the deep. For at his word the stormy wind ariseth : which lifteth up the waves thereof : again he maketh the storm to cease ; so that the waves thereof are still.*

An event eminently favorable to our security and prosperous to our land, on an element so friendly to us, yet so beyond our controul, comes home to our best feelings—our feelings of gratitude : gratitude to our brave fellow countrymen, who thus adventure in our cause—gratitude, on their account as on our own, to him, who *commandeth the winds and the sea, and they obey him.* Of this recent event, (which henceforward adds the
brightest

brightest trophy to the unnumbered glories of our naval annals) it may without impropriety, I trust, be noticed, that in the judgment of the best informed, its consequences are incalculable : and that in itself, it is not less conspicuous for the display of the patriotic valour of individuals ; the general brilliancy of the event : than for the providential controul of the elements ; which spared to victors and vanquished the horrors of a watery grave. I speak with diffidence. Whatever gives point to our gratitude, is worthy the occasion.

Sad, however, that in remembrance of an event, which cheers the sinking heart, and elevates the soul to gratitude, even a transient recollection should cross, which must provoke the tear of lamentation. The common sentiments of humanity must urge to lament over bloodshed : even a fallen enemy shares the tear of sympathy. What then, when the fallen are our friends, our brethren ; brethren united to us not more by nature than by gratitude ? Could they behold, their
brave

brave hearts would be satisfied they are not forgotten. They live in their relatives; and those already adopted by their country: in their country, they have doubly served: for they have fallen in its cause, and left us their example!

It was the object in dwelling on this event to remark that we derive some warrant from it, *to put our trust in the Lord*. We have experienced singular protection: protection, in which the hand of God is evident. Shall we not say *happy are the people that are in such a case: Yea, blessed are the people, who have the Lord for their God?* Say we more. *Thou, O Lord, art praised in Sion, and unto thee shall the vow be performed in Jerusalem.* Be that vow the vow of gratitude: shewing itself in faithful services to God and man. Let us remember that although God *judgeth the nations*; a people fruitful in good works, must prove his delight.

Let the hand of correction, which is still upon us, urge to an amendment of our ways: let obedience at once testify our re-

membrance of past blessing, and the earnest
of our future hope : let us *tarry the Lord's*
leisure ; let us be strong, and he shall comfort
our hearts : so may we reasonably put our trust
in the Lord.

FINIS.

